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MONITORING OF INTERNATIONAL PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Major issues and programme activities of the United Nations Secretariat and the regional commissions relating to social development and welfare and specific social groups

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Social welfare and social development activities of the regional commissions for the biennium 1991-1992

*E/CN.5/1993/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present information is submitted to the Commission in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1981/20 of 6 May 1981, in which the Council requested the regional commissions to report to the Commission for Social Development at its biennial sessions on social welfare and social development activities.

I. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

A. Ageing

1. Major issues and recent developments

2. The number of elderly persons, defined as persons over 60 years of age, in Europe and North America was less than 90 million in 1950 but has more than doubled in the last 40 years to reach a total of 185 million. This figure is likely to increase to more than 310 million by the year 2025. Population ageing of this magnitude is expected to have manifold economic and social consequences, inter alia: large increases in the numbers of retired people in relation to the labour force (the "elderly dependency ratio"); a large increase in the economic burden placed on societies if today's standards of health care and social security are to be maintained; powerful demands for the reallocation of social support between the elderly and the young; major changes in patterns of consumption, production, savings and investment; and new arrangements for the sharing of purchasing power between the generations.

3. In the region, the reduction in labour supply associated with the ageing of populations is combined with a pronounced trend towards earlier retirement. Labour force participation rates of males aged 55-59, 60-64 and over 65 years have gone down sharply in many countries; participation rates for the female labour force in some of the older age groups have also tended to drop, although less often and by smaller amounts. The expenses of economic and social support programmes, which are often largely determined by the age structure of the population, since the mid-1970s have been the equivalent of one fourth or more of gross domestic product in countries of the region. If these programmes are to be maintained as the share of elderly populations rises, their financing will represent a steadily increasing part of national income.

4. On the evidence available from the region, ageing appears to have only a limited effect on total private consumption. This suggests that the economic consequences of population ageing will be concentrated on the public sectors of the region's economies. Spending on government support for the elderly, even on a per capita basis, is likely to be much higher than on support programmes for the young. If the number of people over 70 and over 80 years of age, and hence the average age of those over 60, continues to rise rapidly, this discrepancy in the levels of social support between different generations will become even more pronounced.

5. One issue of rapidly growing fiscal importance is the extent to which spending on public social programmes should be targeted on young, "core age" or elderly members of various socio-economic groups. Programmes that are closely associated with ageing, such as health care, social security and related income maintenance programmes, already account for large parts of

household incomes and government expenditure. Policies are only beginning to come to terms with the issue of how resources can be divided among generations to ensure adequate short-term coverage and long-term security.

2. Activities of the secretariat

6. The Population Activities Unit of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is continuing to collaborate with national population centres and statistical organizations in the region on policy-relevant research related to the demographic causes, and social and economic consequences, of population ageing. The Unit, with funding support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is carrying out a project entitled "The dynamics of population ageing in ECE countries". The project builds on previous work and extends activities in data collection, with the goal of assessing the social and economic conditions of the elderly population in member countries. A first volume of articles, entitled Demographic Causes and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing: Europe and North America, has been produced. A second volume, including case studies that provide in-depth analyses on a diverse set of topics, such as the social aspects of ageing, living conditions and special needs of the elderly, and the interrelations between society, work and ageing, is currently being prepared. A bibliography of relevant research on population ageing is also currently being prepared.

B. Family

Activities of the secretariat

7. Fertility and family surveys are being conducted in selected member countries of the region in the context of a project carried out by the Population Activities Unit and funded by UNFPA. A questionnaire was prepared and pretested in several countries. Drawing on the experience obtained, the questionnaire was revised and improved. It comprises modules on migration, contraception, values and beliefs and acceptance of population policy. In order to encourage consistent and relevant data gathering, a training workshop was held at the Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw, from 10 to 28 February 1992, attended by 15 participants from 11 countries of the region. The training focused on the use of the Integrated System for Survey Analysis (ISSA) for creating national dictionaries, data files, standard recode files and tabulations.

8. The commission presented a discussion note to the expert group meeting on family planning, health and family well-being, held at Bangalore from 26 to 30 October 1992. The note, entitled "Family planning and reproductive health in selected member States of the Economic Commission for Europe", focused on current issues and problems, particularly in the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSON FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

9. Social development in the region lags behind the generally buoyant economic growth it has been enjoying in recent years. In order to close this gap, the

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is undertaking a wide variety of activities to promote and support government action for social development. The major areas of work of the secretariat are elaborated below. It should be mentioned, however, that the secretariat carries out related activities in the areas of population, human settlements, human resources development and environment.

10. A combination of interrelated problems relating to population, health, education, shelter, employment, the environment, natural disasters, crime and social security continue to affect the people of the region, particularly members of disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups, such as the poor, children and youth, women, disabled persons and the elderly. The emergence of certain "new" problems, inter alia, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), drug abuse and the increasing numbers and growing intensity of social conflicts, has combined with inadequate education, poor health, disintegrating families, unemployment and crime to reinforce the view that social progress and improved human welfare do not automatically follow even the high levels of economic growth being experienced in parts of the region.

11. This realization was reflected in the determination of Governments of the region to adopt a new approach to social development, as contained in the Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region towards the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Strategy was adopted by the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, convened at Manila from 7 to 11 October 1991. It was later endorsed in resolution 48/5 1/ by the ESCAP Commission at its forty-eighth session, held at Beijing. The Strategy comprises a multisectoral, integrated approach to national social development policy and planning, combining the three themes of eradiction of absolute poverty, realization of distributive justice and enhancement of popular participation.

2. Activities of the secretariat

12. The secretariat has taken the following action to implement the social development strategy:

(a) Assistance has been rendered to Governments in the planning and delivery of social services, the development of policies to deal with crime and the treatment of offenders, and the development of community-based approaches to demand aspects of drug abuse reduction;

(b) Planning and training workshops have been held on the development of community-based approaches to the reduction of demand for drugs;

(c) An expert group meeting has been held on the development of quality of life indicators;

(d) A number of publications have been prepared and disseminated, including the Proceedings of the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development (ST/ESCAP/1070). Other publications include a survey of the quality of life in the region and a report on the social aspects of drug abuse demand reduction policy and programme development. An issue of the Social Development Newsletter focusing on social security has also been issued.

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

13. Young people aged from 15 to 24 years constitute approximately one fifth of the total population of the countries of the region. An assessment of the socio-economic situation of this substantial portion of the region's population yields disturbing conclusions. Young people endure high levels of poverty, ill health, inadequate education and unemployment. Indeed, a large proportion of them live in uncertain situations, with little scope for planning their future. The problems are, of course, unevenly distributed throughout the region and within individual countries, although, in general, they are more intense in the less developed countries of the region.

2. Activities of the secretariat

14. Recently, concern about the problems of youth has concentrated on the human resource needs of changing economies, and special consideration is being accorded to the growing number of symptoms of youth disaffection, such as youth crime and drug abuse. In support of national action, the following activities have been undertaken:

(a) Training courses have been convened to train trainers in functional literacy for girls and young women, and in rural and urban youth work;

(b) Seminars have been conducted on the effects of new technologies on the working life of young people, and on programmes to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents;

(c) Publications have been prepared and disseminated on the socio-economic aspects of youth unemployment, and on youth participation in environmentally sustainable development. A newsletter has been published reporting on youth activities in the region.

C. Ageing

1. Major issues and recent developments

15. Asian and Pacific societies are ageing rapidly. By the early years of the next century, in most countries of the ESCAP region, elderly persons will constitute more than 10 per cent of the population. The major current issue in the field of ageing in the region is the formulation of comprehensive policies. The policies would focus on appropriate measures for the care and support of the elderly and on developmental efforts encompassing assistance for lifelong preparation for old age, and measures for the provision of social security in old age.

2. Activities of the secretariat

16. A project to assist in the development of comprehensive national policies on ageing is currently being implemented. Guidelines for the preparation of a series of country studies have been formulated and several of these studies are being prepared.

D. Disabled persons

1. Major issues and recent developments

17. During the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992, considerable awareness of disability issues was generated in the region. The major issues concern legislation on protection of the rights of disabled persons; accessibility to the built environment and to information; availability of low-cost and culturally appropriate technical aids, education facilities and training; and the availability of employment opportunities.

2. Activities of the secretariat

18. To build on the momentum generated during the Decade, the Commission at its forty-eight session in April 1992 adopted resolution 48/3 1/ proclaiming the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

19. The secretariat is currently engaged in promoting the implementation of resolution 48/3. An intergovernmental meeting to launch the Decade has been held. Assistance has been provided to Governments in the formulation of a regional agenda for the Asian and Pacific Decade. Publications have been prepared and disseminated on training for self-help organizations and on national focal points and experts on disability in the region.

III. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

20. The major social issues in the region continue to be closely related to the impact of the debt crisis and structural adjustment on the welfare of sections of the population and on the resulting debate over how best to achieve social equity in the context of economic change. Some recent developments offer hope for improvement in the social situation in several countries: capital flows from outside the region have improved, and progress has been achieved in the socially painful process of re-establishing macro-economic balance. This, together with the greater understanding gained of social processes during the decade "lost" to development during the 1980s and the re-establishment of democratic forms of public debate and decision-making, made room for fresh beginnings in strategies for economic development in a new global context, with greater social equity.

2. Activities of the secretariat

21. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), through its Social Development Division, has carried out several activities in the regular framework of its programmes, particularly in programme elements concerned with the dynamics of social stratification and changes in poverty; styles of development; strategic social groups: main problems and policies to solve them; and integration of women into development.

22. In 1991, the Social Development Division, jointly with the Statistics and Projections Division, started publication of a study entitled Social Panorama, which will provide periodically background information on the social situation

in the region. It will contribute to the work of extending and updating the development evaluations that are constantly being carried out by the secretariat, and is a significant addition to the activities with which the Commission has, since the 1960s, analysed the achievements and insufficiencies resulting from social changes in the region.

23. On the basis of household surveys, the influence of various factors on the quality of life of population groups of different ages (children 0-14 years old; young people 15-24 years old; adults 25-59; and older people) is examined in order to follow their evolution and study their trends. Through this examination, it has been possible to select indicators and to identify vulnerable population groups. Some aspects of the analysis are based on the influence of types of families on the educational achievements of their members, and occupation and income with relation to education and gender. The 1992 edition of this study, which includes analyses of six new countries, is now being prepared.

24. The secretariat collaborated with the Government of Chile in the preparation of the Third Regional Conference on Poverty, held at Santiago in November 1992. This activity is included under the framework of agreements reached during the Second Regional Conference, which took place at Quito in November 1990, during which Governments of the region agreed to hold such meetings biennially under the sponsorship of the host Government.

25. The meeting evaluated efforts to alleviate poverty carried out by the countries of the region during the last two years, analysed the regional experience in policies to increase productivity of poor rural and urban groups, reviewed regional experience in targeting social policy to overcome poverty, and examined methodological achievements in the evaluation of poverty situations.

26. The substantive participation of the secretariat, through its Social Development Division and Statistics and Projections Division, was oriented especially toward the preparation of five technical documents and 17 case-studies carried out by national consultants as technical background for the debates. Also, a preparatory workshop was carried out for the countries of the Caribbean subregion. These activities were carried out in close consultation with the host Government and in collaboration with representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

27. The issues of concern to young people vary considerably from country to country. In some places, illiteracy and open unemployment affect large numbers of young people; in others, inequality of opportunity among youth from different social strata have contributed to social tensions and conflicts. Some countries have experienced high levels of political violence directly affecting young people and most face growing problems of drug use, production and trafficking. Newly-emerging issues include the uncertain prospects for integration of young people, particularly rural youth and youth from indigenous groups, into adult society in the coming years.

28. Several recent developments reflect a growing concern about youth and increased action. Increasingly, Governments have established youth plans,

national institutes of youth and a wide variety of services responding to the needs of young people.

2. Activities of the secretariat

29. The activities carried out by the Commission through its Social Development Division and Statistics and Projections Division include preparation of a report on the social situation of youth in the region, which appears as a chapter of Social Panorama (see paragraph 22 above).

30. A technical study was published using analyses of statistical data to counteract popularly held, but apparently erroneous, views concerning the current characteristics of youth in the region, and to determine their situation with respect to education, employment and unemployment, and to identify the repercussions of recent economic changes on them and their integration into adult society.

31. Special attention has been given to the situation and needs of rural youth in the region. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses have been carried out on the characteristics of the present generation of rural youth in several countries, and of their prospects for successful integration into adulthood in rural areas in the 1990s. In relation to this little understood sector, two seminars on rural youth are planned for the first quarter of 1993, one in Mexico and one at Mendoza (Argentina).

32. In response to the increasing desire among Governments to design strategies for dealing with youth problems, particularly those of excluded and marginalized sectors (poor youth in urban areas, the informal sector, rural youth), the Commission is directing its efforts towards collaboration with national youth institutes in the various countries. To this end, technical assistance has been given to support policy-oriented research and project design in Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela.

33. In addition, since 1990, the Commission secretariat, as a focal point on youth in the region, has consistently attempted to coordinate interagency action in this area. The convening of four informal interagency meetings and other actions has led to the formulation of a declaration approved by the various organizations. The declaration was presented at the VI Intergovernmental Conference on Youth Policies in Iberoamerica, which took place at Sevilla (Spain) in September 1992.

C. Ageing

Activities of the secretariat

34. The secretariat, in cooperation with the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), has maintained its concern for the situation of the elderly and encouraged their contribution to social and economic development. In this respect, research has been carried out on the socio-economic situation of the elderly in Argentina and in Costa Rica. Two studies were also carried out on social security in relation to the elderly and the necessity of a targeted social programme for the region.

35. In the first week of November 1992, a study group organized jointly with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), CELADE and the International Center on Aging analysed policies designed for the elderly.

D. Family

Activities of the secretariat

36. In the framework of the preparations for the International Year of the Family, the secretariat, through its Social Development Division, has encouraged awareness of the theme for the Year: "family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world".

37. One of the preliminary activities was a workshop on diagnosis of the family situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Santiago (Chile) in November 1991. This workshop was organized by the Commission's secretariat and CELADE, jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Colegio de México, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), PAHO and the International Labour Organisation/Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO/PREALC). In the first quarter of 1993, the Commission will publish in book form a selection of the documents submitted to that workshop.

38. From 23 to 26 October 1992, a methodological workshop on the family was held at Aguascalientes (Mexico). The workshop was organized jointly by ECLAC, CELADE, the Mexican National Statistics, Geography and Information Institute (INEGI) and the Latin American Population Programme (PROLAP). The purpose of the meeting was to draw up general guidelines for reducing the statistical invisibility of the structure and functions of families.

39. Together with the Government of Colombia and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Commission is planning a Regional Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family at Bogotá from 23 to 26 March 1993.

E. Drugs

Activities of the secretariat

40. In accordance with Commission resolution 515 (XXIII), 2/ adopted in May 1990, action in the area of drug control will become part of the regular work programme of the ECLAC system during the biennium 1994-1995. This action was approved at the twenty-fourth session of the Commission, which took place at Santiago (Chile) from 8 to 15 April 1992. It will emphasize the need to increase awareness among Governments of the magnitude of the problem and to help them to create programmes to prevent and reduce the production, consumption of and trade in illicit drugs, as well as to diminish their economic importance by promoting alternative development programmes.

41. ECLAC prepared two documents which provide a general view of the drug problem in the region, with an analysis of its impact on the economic and social structures of the countries of the region.

42. During this period, project AD/GRN/89/607, coordinated by the Caribbean Subregional Office in Grenada and entitled "Illicit drug demand reduction" was completed. The purpose of the project was to reduce demand for drugs by increasing public awareness of the dangers of drug abuse, developing positive alternatives to drug-dependent lifestyles, and providing training activities in the social sectors most highly exposed to drug abuse.

IV. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

A. Social development and welfare

1. Major issues and recent developments

43. The serious deterioration in the social and human conditions precipitated by the socio-economic crisis of the 1980s has not abated to any appreciable extent as Africa enters the 1990s. According to the Economic Report on Africa,1992, published by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), various internal and external problems continue to have repercussions on the social conditions of African countries. These include: the prolonged recession in the world economy, resulting in the fall of commodity prices and reduced demands for Africa's exports; continuing debt burdens; the repercussions of the Persian Gulf war, particularly for oil-producing and North African countries; the unprecedented changes in the eastern European countries, causing a shift of emphasis in aid and resource flows from western countries; internal policy inconsistencies; structural adjustment programmes that ignored the human dimension; growing population rates; and continuing socio-political upheavals in some countries.

44. Consequently, in spite of some improvement in agricultural production, overall economic growth and recovery has been slow, with negative consequences for human well-being. The Human Development Report, 1992 3/ ranks most African countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI). Common problems continue to be persistently low levels of income, short life expectancy, and poor adult literacy rates. Attainment of acceptable levels of nutrition and health remains elusive, particularly in the face of low budgetary allocations, and the worsening human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS pandemic, which has hit some African countries particularly hard. In spite of a big increase in school age populations, government allocations to education remain depressed, and the quality and relevance of education and training, particularly in the face of limited job opportunities, needs considerable improvement. Drop-out and attrition rates are still high and cost-sharing and private education are beyond the means of the poor, who are the majority in Africa.

45. Some progress has been made in democratization and demand for popular participation in governance and development. In some instances, this process has resulted in peaceful transfer of power. In others, however, it has had socio-political and economic costs, in the face of resistance in favour of the status quo. As Africa gradually begins to accept the concepts of a multiparty system and pluralism, the challenge ahead is immense.

2. Activities of the secretariat

46. Consonant with the ECA mandate to monitor the status of social development in the region, the secretariat undertook a critical assessment of social development, as reflected in national development plans of selected African countries, covering such areas as employment, education, population issues, health, women, youth, environment, family and refugees. A report on the state of social development in Africa and policy challenges for the 1990s recommends the type of policies and strategies that African countries could adopt to accelerate social development. A sequel to this report, evaluating the modalities of policy coordination and implementation by social sector institutions, may help to enhance the social dimension of development activities in African countries.

47. In addition, a report on social security systems and national development in Africa has also been completed. In it, the nature, types and coverage of existing social security systems are analysed and proposals made for alternative and appropriate mechanisms to extend social security coverage to wider sectors of the population in the region. The Commission also undertook a review of the implementation of the African Charter for Social Action, using data and information collected from member States. The review indicates that the African social sector was disproportionately affected by the economic crisis of the 1980s, as Governments endeavoured to tighten their fiscal policies through severe cuts in public expenditure. As a result, most of the strategies outlined in the Charter could not be implemented.

48. ECA also undertook two studies in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. A survey of national policies and measures in crime prevention and criminal justice in African countries focuses on the role of the police, the judiciary and community in the prevention of crime and the administration of criminal justice, current policies and measures with regard to new forms of crime, alternative penal sanctions, capital punishment, prisons and the status of prisoners, as well as on the impact of social, cultural and political changes on the prevention of crime and the administration of criminal justice. In a study on the impact of crime on the economic and social development of African countries, the various forms of crime and their extent and seriousness, the various factors contributing to rising rates of crime in the region and the economic and social costs of such trends are all analysed.

49. The secretariat has also continued to provide both technical and substantive support to two institutions dealing with social development issues sponsored by ECA, namely the African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development and the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

B. Youth

1. Major issues and recent developments

50. Because of high fertility rates, Africa's populations are by and large youthful. An estimated 45 per cent of the population in Africa in 1990 was under 15 years of age. By the turn of the century, more than half of this group will enter the youth cohort, exerting more pressure on social services such as education and training, health, housing, employment and transportation. According to the Economic Report on Africa, 1992, overall productive employment in the region is expanding by only 2.4 per cent a year, while the labour force is growing by 3.2 per cent. This rapid increase in the labour force includes a large percentage of new and young entrants from the educational and training institutions, as well as the youth, largely untrained and unskilled, who migrate from the impoverished rural areas to the urban centres.

51. As the expansion of the labour markets is clearly not commensurate with the expanding labour force, employment prospects for young people in Africa, especially in the modern sector, are bleak and are likely to remain so in the coming years. This situation is manifested in the increasingly high rates of unemployment and underemployment among youth, leading to vagrancy, juvenile delinquency, prostitution with all its health ramifications, and a growing phenomenon of drug abuse and illicit trafficking among young people. This situation is a major source of concern for the region, for increasing numbers

of unemployed, unproductive and restless youth are likely to have negative effects on socio-political stability, as a few examples have already shown. Hence the need for social policies and programmes which will intensify the role of youth and increase their participation in the development process.

2. Activities of the secretariat

52. The commission's activities in the field of youth included the completion of a technical publication on Youth and Health: Implications for Africa's Manpower for Development and Transformation, in which some of the health hazards currently facing the young population in the region, including the spreading HIV/AIDS pandemic, are analysed, as are the implications of this situation for Africa's efforts to ensure healthy manpower for development. The secretariat has also completed a report on the economic and social situation of urban youth, shedding light on the plight of young people in the cities and the trauma some of them experience when their aspirations are frustrated, particularly in the absence of the social security provided by the extended families they may have left in the rural areas. A study on innovative strategies for dealing with youth unemployment in Africa has proposed strategies that African countries might adopt to meet the growing needs of young people in the region. A Directory of Youth Organizations in African Countries has also been completed.

C. Ageing

A. Major issues and recent developments

53. A recent study on the situation of the ageing population in Africa, undertaken by the secretariat and covering six African countries, indicates that the elderly population (60 years and above) accounts for between 4.3 and 6.6 per cent of the total and that most of the elderly population lives in the rural areas. Assuming that the percentage of the elderly population in other African countries falls within this range, one can safely conclude that an ageing population does not, as yet, pose a serious problem in the African region.

54. This is no cause for complacency, however, as a number of socio-economic factors point to the need for Governments, non-governmental agencies, and communities and families to begin to take cognizance of the growing number of elderly persons in their societies. The annual population growth rate of the region is estimated by ECA at 3 per cent, bringing Africa's total population to an estimated 642 million by 1990 and the elderly population to approximately between 27.6 and 42.3 million. The dependency ratio for the region was 92.5 per cent in 1990 and this estimate would be higher if one were to take into account the fact that several African countries have a mandatory retirement age of 55 years. The rural-to-urban exodus among able-bodied young people is increasing at a phenomenal rate, thus threatening to dismantle the extended family social security system traditionally available to the young and elderly. The AIDS pandemic has aggravated an already precarious health situation in the region, putting enormous pressure on health facilities and leaving the elderly without the care they would normally receive from adult children, and with responsibility for orphaned grandchildren. All these factors have coincided with the economic and social crisis of the 1980s, leading to serious marginalization of vulnerable population groups such as the elderly and an erosion of efforts to implement the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing. 4/

2. Activities of the secretariat

55. As a follow up to the study on the situation of the ageing population in Africa, which covered only six countries, preparatory work is under way on a similar study on the social and economic situation of the ageing in West Africa. The study will focus on such issues as demographic features of the ageing population; policies and programmes relating to the education, employment, social security, health and nutrition and housing for the elderly; and ageing in the context of family and the community. The role of the elderly in the family and society will also be a focus of an expert group meeting on the impact of social and economic changes on the African family. It has been proposed to hold the meeting in 1993 as part of the preparation for the International Year of the Family.

V. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

A. Social development and welfare

Activities of the secretariat

56. A set of social indicators is being developed with a view to monitoring developments on social issues and assessing social trends. The analysis will emphasize indicators on social welfare, drug abuse and crime, as well as specific indicators on the situation of women in the region. Several publications, a survey of social trends and social indicators, a study on the impact of the recent crisis on the social situation and development indicators for women will be completed by the end of 1993.

57. The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has undertaken a regional study on the review and appraisal of the social protection and social security systems in countries of the region, which was published in Arabic in September 1991.

58. An action-oriented field project, entitled "Rural community development in Arab rural areas", has been prepared. The project emphasizes integrated rural community development at the grass roots. It is designed to improve rural family income and thus to help to alleviate poverty in rural communities.

B. Youth

Activities of the secretariat

59. A regional study on drug abuse among young people was undertaken to assess the nature and extent of the problem and to evaluate current treatment and policy measures in the region. This regional study, entitled "Impact on drug abuse among youth in the ESCWA region: Approaches to social integration", with contributions from 10 countries, will be completed by the end of 1992. Another study, entitled "Marginal youth groups and measures to promote their participation in development", will also be published before the end of 1992. The study draws a youth profile for the region, analyses different marginalized youth populations, and provides examples of relevant youth policies and programmes.

C. Ageing

Activities of the secretariat

60. A background paper on the situation of the elderly in the ESCWA region was prepared for an expert meeting on the situation of ageing and the development of policies and programmes for the elderly in the ESCWA region, which will be organized at Cairo in the third quarter of 1993. The meeting is intended to provide a forum for experts and policy-makers to exchange information on issues of ageing and on security systems for the ageing in the region.

D. Disabled persons

Activities of the secretariat

61. A report, entitled "Proceedings of the Conference on the Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region", was published in May 1992 and included an account of the discussions of the Conference, which had been held in November 1989. As a follow-up activity to the Conference, the "Cultural Event for Disabled Persons in the ESCWA region: An event to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) in the ESCWA region", was held from 17 to 18 October 1992. This led to the adoption of guidelines for the formulation of a regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010. A study on the adaptation and transfer of new and appropriate technologies for disabled persons in the ESCWA region was published, in English, in June 1992.

E. Family

Activities of the secretariat

62. A preliminary investigation on the impact of social and economic changes on the Arab family is being published. This paper draws a profile of the Arab family based on available data and assesses the socio-economic and cultural factors that have brought about changes in the family. The study will identify the functions that are still performed by the family and others that have been replaced by different social institutions. Another study on the Arab family has been initiated. The issues that this study will focus on include: legal, political, economic and socio-cultural perspectives of the situation of families in the region; the impact of demographic patterns in the region, wars and internal conflicts and present cultural and religious aspects on the Arab family; and the role of the State in family-related issues. These two studies will serve as background papers for the United Nations Africa and Western Asia Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family, organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the Government of Tunisia, to be held at Tunis from 18 to 22 January 1993.

F. Prevention and control of crime and drug abuse

Activities of the secretariat

63. A study assessing the dimension of crime in the region and reviewing the existing policies for crime prevention and control has been undertaken. This study, the "Review and appraisal of national policies and programmes on crime

prevention and control of drug abuse countries of the ESCWA region", will be published in Arabic before the end of 1992.

64. A study has also been carried out on drug abuse in the region. The study assesses the dimension of the problem and reviews national policies and programmes for its control. This study, entitled "Review and appraisal of national policies and programmes regarding drug abuse control", will also be published in Arabic before the end of 1992.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 11 (E/1992/31), chap. IV.

2/ Ibid., 1990, Supplement No. 14 (E/1990/43), chap. I, sect. B.

3/ UNDP, Human Development Report, 1992 (Oxford University Press, New York, 1992), chap. I, table 1.2.

4/ See Report on the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July-August 1982 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A.